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SUBJECT: COMMONWEALTH SUSPENDS FIJI

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[1](#)1. (SBU) Commonwealth Secretariat Political Director Amitav Banerji confirmed September 1 to Poloff that Commonwealth Secretary General Kamalesh Sharma announced the Republic of Fiji Islands' full suspension from membership of the Commonwealth, effective 00:01 September 1, 2009 (Fiji time). Banerji said the Commonwealth hopes to maintain a dialogue with Fiji and plans to send a delegation in September to engage with the Interim Government.

[1](#)2. (U) The Commonwealth released the following statement:

Fiji Suspended from the Commonwealth
1 September 2009

The Commonwealth Secretary General, Kamalesh Sharma, today announced that the Republic of the Fiji Islands stands fully suspended from membership of the Commonwealth with immediate effect.

"This is an announcement I make with deep regret -- it is a step the Commonwealth is now obliged to take, and one that it takes in sorrow."

"Since Fiji was suspended from the Councils of the Commonwealth following the military overthrow of civilian government in December 2006, sustained efforts have been made by the Commonwealth to engage the Interim Government, so as to promote a return to constitutional democracy, and to encourage a national dialogue aimed at tackling the underlying issues that led to this and past coups."

The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) last met on 31 July, some two and three quarter years after the military overthrow. At that meeting, CMAG urged the Fiji regime to reactivate immediately the President's Political Dialogue Forum (PPDF) process, facilitated by the Commonwealth and the United Nations, in a manner that was independent, inclusive, time-bound and without any pre-determined outcome, and that would lead to credible elections in the country by October [1](#)2010. CMAG had sought a firm commitment from Fiji to these terms by no later than 1 September 2009, failing which it would be fully suspended.

"Although I received a letter from Commodore Bainimarama on 21 August reaffirming his commitment to the principles of the Commonwealth, his response did not meet the terms set out by CMAG on 31 July. I informed him of this in writing on 24

August. Accordingly, Fiji has today been fully suspended from the Commonwealth. I have informed the Interim Prime Minister of Fiji of this decision. I have similarly informed Her Majesty the Queen as Head of the Commonwealth, and all Commonwealth governments."

Elaborating on the implications of "full suspension," the Secretary General said the following provisions would apply with immediate effect: representatives of the Interim Government of Fiji will be excluded from participation at all inter-governmental Commonwealth meetings; likewise, nominees of the Interim Government will not be able to take part in other inter-governmental Commonwealth activities; Fiji will not be able to participate in Commonwealth sporting events; no Commonwealth technical assistance can be provided to Fiji, with the exception of assistance aimed at facilitating the restoration of democracy; while Fiji will remain a member of the Commonwealth, all emblematic representation of Fiji at the Commonwealth Secretariat, at Commonwealth meetings and all other official Commonwealth events will cease; and contact at professional and non-governmental levels with Fiji counterparts will be left to the discretion of individual pan-Commonwealth organizations.

The Secretary General emphasized that the Commonwealth remained open to engaging with the Fiji Interim Government towards the restoration of constitutional democracy in the country. "I welcome the invitation from Commodore Bainimarama to meet my Special Representative in Fiji in September, and look forward to continuing my good offices engagement to promote adherence to Commonwealth principles

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and the welfare of the people of Fiji," Mr. Sharma said.

The Secretary General concluded by expressing the hope that Fiji would take the necessary steps to restore its full participation in the Commonwealth. "We will continue all possible efforts to promote the restoration of Commonwealth principles and enduring adherence to them. We will also continue to bear fully in mind the welfare of the people of Fiji."

End Statement.

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